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Champion

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TAXING THE SICK - HOSPITALS MAKING MILLIONS FROM PARKING CHARGES

...but bosses at Southport & Ormskirk NHS Trust defend policy which saw them rake in more than £1.5m in fees during 2017/18

Report by **Henry James**

BOSSES at Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust have defended their policy which has seen them, and other hospitals across the country, make millions of pounds from car parking charges last year.

According to NHS Digital, which is the national provider of information, data and IT systems for commissioners, analysts and clinicians in health and social care in England, NHS trusts made more than £226m from parking fees for staff, patients and visitors in the last financial year, which is an increase on the year before when the amount collected was £175m.

Almost half of NHS hospitals have put up parking fees despite ministers vowing to end rip-off charges. Prices have even doubled at some sites – with staff, patients and their families forced to pay as much as £4 an hour.

The crackdown promised by the former health secretary, Jeremy Hunt, has not materialised with 43 per cent of NHS trusts in England raising their parking fees in 2017/18. At the same time the charges have been scrapped in Wales and most of Scotland. Mr Hunt ordered hospitals four years ago to set 'reasonable' fees, to limit fines and to offer discounts to relatives of the gravely ill.

Locally, during the financial year 2017/18, Ormskirk Hospital made £629,187 from car parking charges and Southport Hospital £895,221, which is a combined total of £1,524,408. **Continued inside**

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Car Park C

Southport & Ormskirk NHS Trust raked in £1,524.408 from parking charges in 2017/8

INSIDE THIS WEEK...

Erin in national talent final in London

Chance to 'Get Active'

CROSSWORD
See Page 30

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West End hopeful sings her way to final of national talent contest

Report by **Kenny Parker**

THE STAR continues to rise for one talented 14-year-old singer from West Lancashire after she earned a place at the Open Mic UK 2018 Grand Final to be held in London.

Young Erin Howard, who attends Ormskirk High School and who has aspirations of performing in London's West End, has already won three different regional competitions for her singing – the St Helens, Majestic (Liverpool) and Wigan's Got talent contests.

Now, after seeing off both local and regional competition in the preliminary rounds of the Open Mic UK 2018 competition, the Ormskirk youngster will be heading to London's O2 Arena on January 20 where she will compete against 25 other contestants in the final.

Erin said "I'm absolutely thrilled to have made it through to the Grand Final. It's so exciting to think that I'm going to get the chance to sing at the O2 in London. I'm so grateful of all the support I've had so far and I hope I can make everyone proud."

Open Mic UK bills itself as the UK's premier competition for unsigned acts.

Erin performing at the regional finals of the Open Mic UK 2018 competition.

Attracting more than 10,000 entries from across the UK, prizes include recording studio time, free filming and photos of performances. The overall winner from all age categories receives recording studio time to record an album and a video of the best single plus extensive media promotion from a professional PR company.

Young Erin, who is also a part of the multi-award winning team at the Kelly Shirley School of Dance in Burscough, performed What About Usby Pink at Liverpool's Liner Hotel, and a cover of Warrior by Demi Levato in Dewsbury.

Following the first performance her proud father Ian Howard said judges praised her by saying: "An engaging unbelievable performance and you looked like you were loving your time up on that stage, great to see you smile!"

Ian said: "Erin studies music and performing arts at school and hopes to pursue a career in performing.

"She loves musical theatre and hopes that maybe one day she could perform in the West End."

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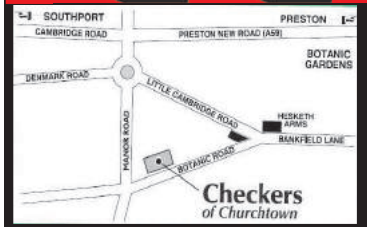

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Tory MP under fire for leaving out borough at Lancashire Day events in Parliament

But Rosie Cooper told - 'you have politicised celebrations by trying to score cheap political points'

Report by **Kenny Parker**

WEST Lancashire MP Rosie Cooper has hit out at the Conservative Party and event organisers who chose not to recognise West Lancashire as part of their Lancashire Day celebrations in Parliament.

The Taste Lancashire event, which featured more than a dozen Lancashire-based food and drink producers, was hosted by Pendle Conservative MP Andrew Stephenson and organised by Marketing Lancashire, the organisation charged with promoting the county nationally and internationally.

There was no business representation from West Lancashire, however, and MP Rosie Cooper says the Tories continue to ignore areas like West Lancashire when promoting Lancashire and the Northern Powerhouse.

Ms Cooper points out that Andrew Stephenson is a Tory Whip in a Tory Government, and that both Lancashire County Council and Pendle Borough Council are under Tory control.

Mr Stephenson has responded by saying that Ms Cooper had politicised an event that was otherwise successful and that if she had been "so concerned" she could have organised it herself.

MP Rosie Cooper said: "This is extremely disappointing and another smack in the face for the people of West Lancashire - we're not even deemed worthy of an invite to a Lancashire Day event held in parliament.

"With the name of the event Taste Lancashire, I could have put Mr Stephenson in touch with many budding and successful West Lancashire businesses who I am sure would have loved the opportunity to take part.

"The Conservative Northern powerhouse concept once again completely bypasses West Lancashire as initially did the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and its arc of prosperity.

"It's taken a lot of work to improve the relationship with the LEP but it seems like West Lancashire has a lot of work to do to be considered and included as an integral part of Lancashire by the current regime!"

MP Rosie Cooper in parliament

MP Andrew Stephenson.

'If she was so concerned she could have organised it herself...'

Ms Cooper said she has often nominated West Lancs businesses for awards and has even introduced a draught ale from a West Lancashire brewer to the House of Commons bar.

Marketing Lancashire has been approached for comment.

MP Andrew Stephenson said that Parliament has not held a Lancashire Day event since 2012 and that he wanted to help Marketing Lancashire "put that right" by booking a room for their event this year.

Emphasising that it was well attended by Labour and Conservative MPs from across Lancashire, he said: "I am sorry that Rosie Cooper has tried to politicise the event to try and score cheap political points.

"If she was so concerned about West Lancashire being represented then perhaps she could have considered organising her own event, during the past six years when one hasn't taken place. Or she could have come on the day, to speak to the Chief Executive of Lancashire County Council, the head of Marketing Lancashire, or other organisers. She didn't. I suppose she feels it is easier to criticise others than get her hands dirty doing any actual work."

Hospitals are making millions from parking fees

From page 1

A spokesman for Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust said: "The trust last raised parking charges in May 2017 when 10p was added to a 20-minute to two-hour stay. It was the first rise for more than two years."

However bosses at Southport and Ormskirk Hospital were quick to point out that they were not one of the four in 10 hospitals, mentioned in the report, which had increased car parking prices in the last year. Some trusts doubled their parking charges costs.

Therese Patten, deputy chief executive at the trust, said: "Money raised from car parking charges at the trust goes towards the cost of maintaining the car parks, with any surplus going directly to patient care."

The spokesman added: "For frequent visitors, passes are available for £10 a week or £30 for three months plus a £10 refundable deposit. These are available from the general office at either hospital site or the porters' lodge out of office hours."

To use the car park at Southport and Ormskirk hospitals for 0-20 minutes it is free; for 20 minutes to two hours it is £2.90; from two to four hours, it is £3.50; from four to eight hours, it is £4.30, and for more than eight hours, it is £5.30.

In the 2016-17 financial year, a total of £633,267 was collected at Ormskirk District General Hospital and £891,267 at Southport District General Hospital.

Residents going to Aintree hospital face paying £3 for a one-hour visit - one of the most expensive trusts in England for an hour's stay. Last year Aintree University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust made an estimated £1.8m from car parking charges.

Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool scrapped its £2 flat rate for a full day, tripling the cost of a stay longer than eight hours. As a result, parking for up to two hours now costs £2.50, while six to eight hours is £4.50 and eight to 24 hours is £6. Rachel Power, chief executive of the Patients Association commented: "We believe that patients should not be effectively charged for being ill."

The Department of Health has said that patients, their families and hardworking staff should not have to face "unfair parking charges." They added that NHS trusts were responsible for the charges and for seeing revenue going back into frontline services and added, "we want to see trusts coming up with options that put staff, patients and their families first."

One of the highest earning trusts in England from parking was Frimley Health in Surrey, which made £4.5m.

Partially-sighted man hurt after falling over displaced wall block near home

A PARTIALLY-SIGHTED man hurt his head, chest and leg and also suffered cuts and bruises after tripping over a dislodged wall block, near where he lives in Birkrig.

Anthony Dixon's partner, Lynne Hall, wants to know why the wall is not maintained near Anthony's house, following the accident on Monday, December 17.

Lynne said: "Anthony had been to the Mucky Duck pub in Digmoor. He fell over while walking home with a friend.

"Anthony hurt his head, chest, leg and had cuts and bruises. There are many old people who live round here. I don't know who is responsible for the wall block?"

Partially-sighted Tony Dixon and his guide dog on the path where he tripped over a dislodged wall block.

New play equipment to be installed at Stanley Coronation Park

WEST Lancs Council is to install new play equipment at Stanley Coronation Park, in Sandy Lane, Skelmersdale.

The new equipment, aimed at the over-13s, will offer challenges and a fun element to include a multi-activity climbing unit, multi-person rope swing and basket swing.

These additional feature pieces will complement the existing younger children's play provision and outdoor gym facility in the park. Installation work is scheduled to begin this week (January 3) with completion expected by early February.

Councillor Yvonne Gagen, the council's cabinet member for leisure, said: "This is a great investment in the park and I am sure the teenagers will really enjoy using the new equipment."

A computerised image of how the new equipment may look in the park

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MP backs campaign to tackle football-related gambling among young people in the borough

Report by **Kenny Parker**

A clip from a short film made by GambleAware which targets youngsters who bet on football matches

WEST Lancs MP Rosie Cooper is backing a campaign which aims to bring attention to the growing problem of young people betting - particularly on football matches.

#CanWeHaveOurBallBack is a campaign by GambleAware, an independent charity tasked to fund research, education and treatment services to help to reduce gambling-related problems.

The focus of the campaign is a short film, which can be shared online, designed to raise awareness and encourage discussion about the relationship between football and betting.

Recent financial analysis by the charity and gambling industry specialists, Regulus Partners, shows that 80% of marketing spend by gambling companies is now online.

This coincides with growing concern about the nature and extent of gambling-related marketing and whether it has led to the normalisation of gambling for children.

Figures released by the Gambling Commission show that 450,000 children spend their own money on gambling while an estimated 55,000 are problem gamblers.

Rosie Cooper said: "This is an important initiative which brings much-needed attention to a growing issue in our community.

"Football is a game which is enjoyed by people of all ages, but without a frank discussion about the recent spike in gambling-related marketing, we're in danger of forgetting the reasons people fell in love with the sport in the first place.

"I hope this initiative encourages local fans to reconsider their relationship with betting and football, and remember that ultimately football is about the games, rather than winning bets."

The GambleAware film is directed by BAFTA nominee Scott Lyon and can be viewed on YouTube by searching for GambleAware #CanWeHaveOurBallBack.

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Stormy Corner when Skelmersdale United played there

Competitive semi-professional football could be returning to Stormy Corner

Report by **Henry James**

PLANS are in the pipeline which would see competitive football return to Stormy Corner in the not too distant future after a new football club was established.

Talks are at an advanced stage between Frank Hughes, and Chequer Properties Ltd and the objective is to see competitive semi-professional football return to the town.

Hughes - the former chairman of Skelmersdale United FC has recently formed the new club, Skelmersdale AFC and they are keen to join the North West Counties Football League for the 2019-20 season.

Frank Hughes said: "A lot of people are determined to see semi-professional football return to Skelmersdale, but the public will want to be reassured that the club is viable, responsibly managed and sustainable.

"We have put together a team of people that we believe can deliver such an ambitious project – people with vast experience within the non-league football arena.

"It's not been the easiest of tasks, because whilst we've got vast experience of running a football club...this is the first time any of us have attempted to build one from scratch. And there is still a long way to go before we become a valid entity.

"Fortunately the feedback is good and negotiations have moved on considerably since we first discussed the idea back in August 2018.

"We are fully affiliated with the Liverpool County FA, we have met with the NWCFL to put our case forward and the National FA is also aware of our intentions."

Stormy Corner facilities away from the playing surface are currently in a state of disrepair, which has prompted Chequer Properties Ltd to re-evaluate the site's future.

A spokesman for Chequer Properties Ltd said, "Unfortunately the stadium buildings have been allowed to decline over several years and have also been subjected to acts of mindless vandalism and most recently an arson attack.

"Having studied the site with our architect, it's clear for sustainable football as originally intended, we'll need to seek changes with the consent of the local planning authority.

"We are looking at ways of renovating facilities to achieve low maintenance, and utilise part of the footprint for other investment projects.

"We have an ambitious club that approached us with the view to negotiating a lease contract, in order for this to become operational, we're obliged to carry out site work bringing the ground back up to the standard required for the FA & NWCFL."

Southport FC are currently using the pitch and part of the site as a training facility, they have again extended the original agreement with Chequer Properties Ltd until May 2019.

Works are scheduled to commence in January 2019.

A spokesman for North West Counties Football League said: "A new club can apply for membership of our League as long as there are vacancies after promotion and relegation has been decided (there are none currently) plus they must also meet the relevant ground grading requirements by 31 March 2019 to achieve membership.

"Ordinarily, a new club should start at the level below ours unless exception circumstances dictate they start higher up the pyramid at Step 6."

Skelmersdale United had played at the ground from 2004 until 2017 - when they were evicted by the stadium's owners, Chequer Properties.

Owner fined for failing to update pets' microchips

Report by **Henry James**

A COURT has ordered the owner of two Shih Tzu type dogs topay more than £1,000 in fine and costs for not providing them with identity discs and failing to have their microchip details updated correctly.

Wigan and Leigh Magistrates Court heard that the two dogs were picked up by West Lancashire Borough Council's stray dog kennelling contractor. They were found to be microchipped but neither chip had details on it and neither were wearing an identity disc. The dogs were collected from the council's kennelling contractor by Daniel McGrath, of Broad Lane, Downholland.

Dog owners can face an unlimited fine if their dog is not wearing an identity disc in public. If they have more than one dog in public without identity discs they can face separate fines for each dog. It is also a legal requirement for them to be microchipped and the owner's contact details kept up to date. Anyone failing to meet these requirements can be served with a 21-day legal notice ordering them to get their dog chipped and updating the council to confirm once this is done.

Failure to comply with the notice can result in prosecution and a fine of up to £500 per dog. Dogs with microchips where the owner has failed to keep their contact details up to date will be deemed not to be microchipped. The council served legal notices on McGrath requiring him to update the animals' microchips so the compulsory ownership details were recorded on them.

Councillor Kevin Wright has warned dog owners to comply

These notices were not complied with leading the council to start court proceedings against him. Mr McGrath did not attend court and was found guilty in his absence.

He was fined £660 and ordered to pay costs and victim surcharge of £435.65.

Councillor Kevin Wright, portfolio holder for community safety, said: "The council takes its role with regards the laws around dogs very seriously. So be warned, owners who fail to comply with the legislation could face a heavy fine. When a dog is microchipped it can help trace who the keeper of the dog is. This may assist in reuniting dogs with their keepers or even trace the keepers of dogs involved in attacks."

Health chiefs' warning after norovirus strikes patients

VISITORS with tummy bugs are being reminded to stay away from hospitals if they are ill with vomiting or diarrhoea.

The warning comes after an outbreak of norovirus, the winter vomiting bug, temporarily closed Ward 14A at Southport and Formby District General Hospital during Christmas.

Andrew Chalmers, consultant nurse and deputy director of infection prevention and control, said: "Norovirus is highly infectious and is circulating in the local community.

"Patients' friends and family who have symptoms of either diarrhoea or vomiting should not visit the hospital until they are symptom-free for at least 48 hours.

"Also, if the patient you want to visit has these symptoms, my advice is to delay your visit until their symptoms have resolved. In circumstances where this is not possible, please make arrangements in advance of visiting by telephoning the ward sister."

Anyone who has experienced sickness or diarrhoea in the past 48 hours should stay away from hospitals and other healthcare providers, except in a genuine medical emergency.

Symptoms of norovirus include a sudden onset of vomiting and/or diarrhoea. Some may have a temperature, headache and stomach cramps.

Andrew added: "Norovirus is short-lived but very unpleasant. You don't want it and our patients certainly don't. If you're affected, stay at home, drink plenty of fluids, wash your hands after using the toilet and prior to eating, and clean or disinfect contaminated surfaces."

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Man fined £440 for dropping a cigarette butt while driving car

Report by **Henry James**

A DRIVER has been fined £440 after he was spotted dropping a cigarette butt while driving his vehicle in Skelmersdale.

Discarding cigarette ends is a littering offence punishable with a £75 fixed penalty notice. However, failure to pay the penalty is likely to result in court action and a much more expensive bill, including a heavy fine.

Wigan Magistrates Court heard that a man driving along Mill Lane, Skelmersdale was seen by a West Lancs Council officer dropping a cigarette end out of the vehicle.

The vehicle was traced back to a Mr Norman Bray of Heskin Close, Kirkby who was issued with a fixed penalty notice of £75 when this was not paid the council then took the matter to the magistrates court.

Mr Bray did not attend court and was found guilty in his absence.

As well as his fine, he was also ordered to pay costs of £397.14 and a victim surcharge of £44, a total of £881.14.

Councillor Kevin Wright, West lancs Council's cabinet member for health and community safety, said: "By failing to dispose of his cigarette butt properly this man has landed himself with a bill of nearly £900.

"This case should act as a warning that we will crack down on people who litter and will take appropriate action against those found doing it.

"Cigarette butts account for 40% of all the litter dropped in the UK.

"They are an environmental hazard as the filters take up to 12 years to biodegrade and are harmful to wildlife.

"I would urge people to dispose of them very carefully."

Dropping cigarettes is illegal

Members from Skelmersdale Veterans' Association at the Under The Bark Open Day

Veterans visit former serviceman's company

MEMBERS of the Skelmersdale Veterans' Association attended an open day at a company in Coppull called Under The Bark, specialising in personalised handmade furniture created to order by ex-serviceman Jason Johnson.

As a result of their visit, Jason made some plaques for the group one of which is on display at their base at The Buffs in Ormskirk Road, Skelmersdale.

Meanwhile the veterans have announced that their annual general meeting will be held at The Buffs on Sunday, January 13 starting at 1pm.

Chairman, Alan Lewis, said: "I would like to thank all the veterans for their on-going support throughout the year. This year the group has visited local primary schools, care homes, and also been involved in the Armed Forces Weekend and the Poppy Appeal.

"I would also like to say a very big thank-you to all the local firms for supporting the association, especially Asda and the Concourse, plus the public for their assistance as well."

Members of the association, Jimmy Matthew, Tommy Creecy and Tommy Hart, recently visited Roby Mill CE Primary School and took along First and Second World War equipment and medals including some items donated by the public.

Lifesavers awarded Survive and Save open water medals

FOUR senior members from Skelmersdale Lifesavers have been awarded Survive and Save Beach Bronze Medallions after demonstrating various water-based techniques and survival swims in the River Mersey off New Brighton on a wet and windy day earlier this year.

This is the first time anyone from the group has gained this particular open water award.

Meanwhile two senior members were pleased to show their Survive and Save Still Water Silver awards gained at Boundary Park at lake Cranage near Knutsford, where, in September they again demonstrated water based rescue skills and survival swimming in open water.

The group also received trophies won at the Liverpool and District Challenge Cup, held at Crewe in November. Competitors had to demonstrate various rescue and towing techniques being marked for performance and skills throughout. Members did particularly well – winning the 13 to 15 group and receiving the shield and plaques.

The 16 to 18 group also did very well coming second and receiving plaques. Again competition was fierce, the numbers of competitors being well above entrants of previous years.

Skelmersdale Lifesavers meet each Tuesday 8pm -9pm at Nye Bevan pool.

New members are always welcome, the only requirement is that they are a minimum of 11 years of age and of a reasonable swimming ability Coaching is free, the only cost is for pool entry fees.

The two boys (back row left) and two girls (front row left) who received their Survive and Save Beach Bronze Medallions after demonstrating various water based techniques and survival swims in the River Mersey off New Brighton

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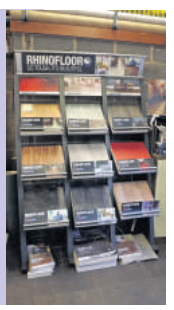

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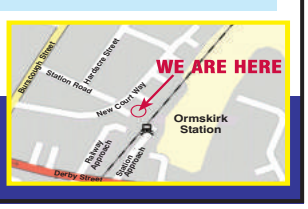

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GP surgeries and pharmacist teams 'ready for winter challenge'

Report by **Henry James**

GP surgeries and pharmacist teams say they are ready for the challenges of winter.

Business continuity plans are in place to ensure pharmacy and GP services across winter are able to help the public get emergency medication when they need it.

Pharmacies and surgeries are also playing a vital part in providing flu vaccinations to the public. Getting the flu jab is one of the best ways of protecting yourself from and preventing the spread of flu.

A network of community pharmacies provides the NHS Urgent Medicines Supply Advanced Service (NUMSAS). This enables pharmacies to receive direct referrals from NHS111, when a patient calls for emergency supplies of medicines if they are unable to access their normal service. Patients are referred to registered pharmacies for a consultation and the dispensing of urgent medication if appropriate.

Across Cheshire, Merseyside, Lancashire and South Cumbria

Dr Kieran Murphy

teams have helped 23,697 patients with urgent medicines request in the last 12 months.

A new initiative has also been launched with pharmacies across Cheshire, Merseyside, Lancashire and South Cumbria to support patients with taking new medicines when they leave hospital.

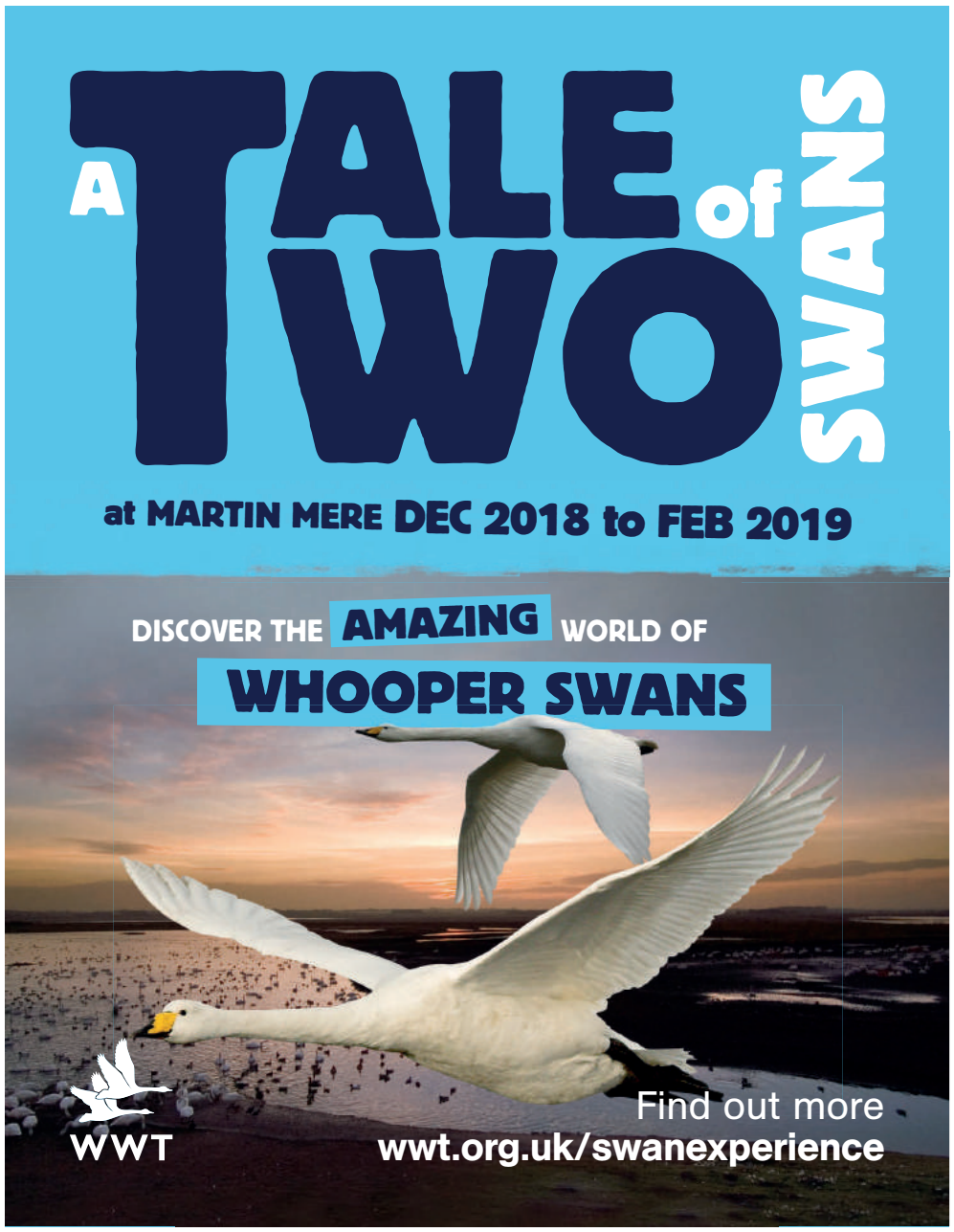
The scheme is called Transfers of Care Around Medicines (TCAM) and it involves community pharmacists providing advice to patients about their new medicines after they are discharged from hospital, reducing the chances of them having to be re-admitted.

NHS England's medical director for Cheshire, Merseyside, Lancashire and South Cumbria, Dr Kieran Murphy, said: "Last year was challenging in terms of weather and our GP, pharmacy, dental and ophthalmology staff really went the extra mile to provide services.

"We have plans in place to ensure provision across the region, and we are also asking the public to think carefully about which service they use and to get their flu jab.

"Using your local pharmacy for advice on minor illnesses is a quick way to get expert help and NHS.UK and the NHS child health app are excellent sources of advice. If you have an urgent medical need, call 111 or go to 111.nhs.uk."

GP extended access services, usually provided in hubs across Cheshire, Merseyside, Lancashire and South Cumbria now offer additional GP and nurse appointments for patients, which are available in the evenings and over the weekend, with services also available over the festive period. Patients can find out more about local extended access services from their practice reception or on their practice website.



WWT **Martin Mere news**

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Discover the amazing world of Whooper Swans at Martin Mere

Happy New Year! What better way to celebrate the start of the New Year than with a visit to WWT Martin Mere Wetland Centre. Come and discover why we're the only place in the North West that welcomes thousands of whooper swans over winter. Every year, around 2,000 whooper swans migrate to here from Iceland and spend the winter on the mere. To celebrate these amazing swans, we've got a number of swan-themed activities at the centre.

Every Saturday in January we are holding our Swans Awake event. Book your tickets to experience the thrill of an early morning hide visit with a warden and watch as the mere comes to life as the sun rises, followed by a full English breakfast in our café. If early mornings aren't for you, try one of our Floodlit Swan events instead. Held on Tuesday evenings in January, you can witness the stunning sight of the wildlife coming in to roost for the evening, all lit up by our floodlights.

As well as these bookable events, we have a number of free activities throughout the centre. In our Exhibition Hall we have our swan pipe experience which is a brilliant opportunity to put yourself in the place of a swan during a catch. You'll be able to go through a replica swan pipe, try on a swan jacket that we use to catch swans, learn how we take measurements including the wingspan of swans, weigh yourself in swan weight and create your own swan ring to keep as a souvenir of your experience.

For younger ones curious about nature we have our Discovery Trail. Collect a booklet on arrival and explore our grounds to find the answers to questions such as how fast do swans fly and how far do they travel. Every child that completes the trail gets a sticker for their swan ID card. The discovery tail is a great way to spend some time exploring as a family and learning as you go.

As well as the discovery trail, you can learn all about WWT's conservation work both past, present and future by taking a look at the WWT Conservation Exhibition in our Exhibition Hall. WWT is a pioneer in wetland conservation - our scientists and conservationists have led the way for more than 70 years.

This winter, wrap up warm and come and enjoy the great outdoors at Martin Mere. You can find out more about A Tale of Two Swans and all our other events throughout the winter months at wwt.org.uk/martin-mere.

Visit the web site www.wwt.org.uk/martinmere to find out what's on the reserve at the moment as well as all the upcoming events

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Public reminded they can speak up on issues that matter to them at council meetings

Report by **Henry James**

RESIDENTS are being reminded that they can give their views on an item on a Borough Council agenda.

People living in West Lancashire have the chance to speak on certain agenda items at Council meetings where important decisions are made that affect people across the borough.

In addition to those arrangements in place for speaking at Planning and Licensing Committees, there is also an opportunity to speak on items being considered at meetings of Cabinet, Audit & Governance Committee, Standards Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The right to speak applies to all meetings of the committees mentioned but residents may wish to note the dates of upcoming meetings at the Council's Derby Street offices:

- Cabinet, Tuesday, January 15, 7pm
- Audit & Governance Committee, Tuesday, January 29, 6.30pm
- Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Thursday, January 31, 7pm

Councillor Ian Moran.

Agendas for these meetings will usually be published on the council's website www.westlancs.gov.uk/coins in the week preceding the meeting. For example the agenda for the January Cabinet will be on the website on Monday, January 7.

To request to speak, members of the public must contact Member Services with their request by 10am on the Friday of the week preceding the relevant meeting. For example a request to speak at cabinet in January 2019 must reach the council by 10am on Friday, January 11.

The request can be submitted by email to member.services@westlancs.gov.uk or by post to: Member Services, West Lancashire Borough Council, 52 Derby Street, Ormskirk, West Lancashire, L39 2DF or by calling 01695 585065.

Full details of the arrangements are provided in the council's Public Speaking Protocol which can be found at www.westlancs.gov.uk/speak.

Councillor Ian Moran, leader of West Lancashire Borough Council, said: "The views of people living in West Lancashire are really important to us. Please take a look at the agendas for these meetings when they appear on the council website and let us know if you want to come and speak on any of the items listed."

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Cash strapped police to ask taxpayers to fork out more for new officers

Report by **Kenny Parker**

LANCASHIRE'S Police and Crime Commissioner, Clive Grunshaw has launched a survey asking council tax payers across the county if they would be willing to pay more to support the recruitment of 80 police officers.

The public are being asked if they would be prepared to pay an extra 46p per week for a Band D property to invest in policing services in their area.

Three-quarters of Lancashire residents are in lower bands and therefore would pay less but even so it is estimated that this would raise more than £10m for policing in the county.

The commissioner says that the extra money would pay for 80 more officers who would be deployed across the county.

The consultation follows the recent budget announcement where the government passed the burden of the cost of policing on to council tax payers.

The latest financial settlement for Lancashire Police from the government is increased by £6.8million.

But while he says any additional funding is welcome, Mr Grunshaw says the rise doesn't even cover the increase to employer pension contributions for policing, announced in September. The 'real-world' consequences of dealing with this pensions deficit alone, is forecast to cost Lancashire Constabulary around £7.1m per year from 2019 to 2020 - equivalent to more than 150 police officers.

Lancashire's Police and Crime Commissioner Clive Grunshaw.

Since 2010 Lancashire Constabulary has had to make more than £84m of savings as a direct result of the government cutting £50m of central funding during the same period, with an additional £18m of savings required by 2022. In the same period Lancashire has lost 800 police officer posts and 350 support staff.

Mr Grunshaw said: "I strongly believe that more funding should come from the government and I will continue to lobby the Home Secretary and Policing Minister.

"The current funding for policing isn't sufficient to deal with growing demands on the police and the financial settlement allows me to raise further funds but only through passing this burden onto council tax payers. This isn't fair and it isn't sustainable.

"However, raising funds through council tax contributions is the only option the government have given me to protect and bolster policing and if I did not consider this, it would mean a cut to our budget.

"There are more than a million calls for service every year to Lancashire Police and investment is needed to keep up with ever-increasing demands on policing and to deliver a service the public expect. Police officers and staff are working round the clock to keep people safe but, they are over stretched."

For more information on the survey and how to complete it either online or a paper version, call: 01772 533587.

A series of engagement events are also planned at locations across the county. In WestLancs this will be at the Concourse shopping centre in Skelmersdale on Wednesday, January 9 between 10am and 12pm. More dates are to be announced.

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U14 rugby side unveil their brand new kit

Report by **Henry James**

TARLETON Rugby Union club's U14 side has unveiled their new O'Neills kit in front of their new team sponsors, parents and supporters.

New sponsors Tarleton Mortgage Centre, Southport Lions Club, The Mirror Booth Company and Little Princess Trust adorn the new shirt which was well received by the lads who love the new style design.

Team manager Simon Martindale said: "We are proud to be unveiling our new kit and welcoming our new team sponsors into the Tarleton Rugby Club Family.

"On behalf of myself, Joe and the lads I would like to thank our new sponsors for getting behind us and helping us to push on as a team."

A spokesperson for the team said: "This new kit marks a new era for this team, our U14s have worked hard on and off the pitch with fundraising events and championing the club in the local community so a brand new kit is well deserved.

"Well done to everyone involved and a big thank you and welcome to our new sponsors!"

Tarleton RUFC under 14s coach and team receive their new kit

Octave's Colin Pomphrett and his wife, Brenda, with the cheque for the Medical Day Unit

Choir hits the right note with fundraising

A COMMUNITY choir has hit the right note by raising £1,800 for leukaemia patients.

The cheque was presented to the Medical Day Unit (MDU) at Southport Hospital by former patient Colin Pompfrett and his wife Brenda, who are both members of the Octave choir.

The money was the proceeds of a concert of songs from the movies and musicals performed by the choir earlier this year.

Octave gives two or three concerts for charity each year and members have raised more than £25,000 since forming 15 years ago.

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Firefighters called out to tackle chip pan blaze

FIRE crews based in Skelmersdale were called to reports of a fire in a domestic property on Daniels Lane, Digmoor on Friday, December 14 at 7.30pm.

The fire involved a chip pan on a cooker which was out on the arrival of firefighters.

Crews used a thermal imaging camera, ventilation unit and some small tools at the incident to make the scene safe.

There were no casualties reported and crews were in attendance for approximately 20 minutes to make sure the home was safe once more.

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Free fitness course set to help locals get back into shape after festive period

Report by **Kenny Parker**

IF you are making a new year's resolution to shed a few pounds and lead a healthier lifestyle then Active West Lancs may be able to help you achieve your goals.

New Active Weight Courses are starting the week beginning January 7 in various venues across the borough including Burscough, Ormskirk, Parbold, Skelmersdale, and Up Holland.

The course is a free 10-week programme aimed at helping people to lose weight by encouraging them to make better lifestyle choices around diet and exercise.

Each week people can be weighed and a different topic/activity is covered aimed at educating and motivating people to make long term changes. These include:

- Portion control and nutritional benefits of different food groups (what is a healthy diet?)
- Fat and sugar content of different foods, eating out and energy value of meals
- Behaviour change and habit
- Food and mood
- How to read food labels and what they really mean
- Recommended weekly physical activity and the benefits and contribution to overall wellbeing and weight loss.

West Lancs resident Ken Smiley carrying the amount of weight he lost on a previous Active Weight course.

Weekly goals are set to motivate people to be consistent and a free booklet/guide is provided to record achievements and weight loss.

A variety of visual resources and interactive activities are used within each hour long session.

The average weight loss for these 10-week courses is approximately between 7lbs and 14lbs.

For more information and to book a place, contact Active West Lancs on 01695 555804 or email: activewestlancs@westlancs.gov.uk.

Active West Lancs is a partnership commissioned by Lancashire County Council to deliver a four-year programme to improve health and wellbeing across West Lancashire, and the borough council is one of the main partners.

Other free new Active West Lancs classes starting the week beginning Monday, January 7 are Exercise to Music at West Lancs Youth Zone, Skelmersdale, on Mondays, 9.30am-10.30am, and Active Tai Chi' at Parbold Women's Institute, on Wednesdays, taking place between 10.30am–11.30am. Booking is essential for the Tai Chi.

Councillor Yvonne Gagen, portfolio holder for Leisure, said: "The New Year is a great time to think about looking after your health and getting fit. So try out these free new classes and see if they can kickstart 2019 to be a healthier year for you."

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Scout who is fundraising to help African families is given a helping hand

Report by **Kenny Parker**

A SCOUT'S dream of travelling to Africa to help poor families has been given a boost after the Ormskirk Rotary Club gave him a donation towards his fundraising target.

15-year-old Joe Morrow, who lives in Westhead and attends Ormskirk School, has signed up for a West Lancs scouting "adventure of lifetime", which will see scouts head to a village in Uganda next summer and build a farm from scratch and also provide a new, clean water source.

When up and running the farm produce will help to pay for a school for the local children.

Joe, an Explorer Scout with Ormskirk District, needs to raise £1,200 for the journey and received a £150 donation from Ormskirk Rotary Club to help him on his way.

He was given extra funding from the club because he had taken part in a Rotary club community initiative when he was in primary school.

Joe said: "I was originally interested in travelling to a deprived area to see how differently they live and to hopefully improve their way of life like we have here. "Part of scouting is about helping other people and this fundamental quality is expressed perfectly through this opportunity.

Ormskirk Rotary Club President John McCormick presents Explorer Scout Joe Morrow with £150 cheque.

"So far I have done many bag packing and like events as well as host an interior design event for family and friends. I have also held a raffle with prizes that I managed to obtain through kind donations from local businesses."

John McCormick, President of Ormskirk Rotary Club, said: "We wish Joe good luck with his fundraising which is for such a good cause. We increased our donation from what we would usually give to an individual because he took part in the Rotary Junior Community Award scheme when he was in year six at primary school."

If you would like to donate to Joe's fundraising appeal, see website www.gofundme.com Go Fund Me website and search '2019 Uganda scouting expedition!'

You can email him onmozza74514@gmail.com for more information.

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Fleetwood (centre) with the young golfers

Fleetwood goes back to his golfing roots to help youngsters

Report by **Tom Martin**

TOMMY Fleetwood returned to his roots and quickly got back into the swing of things by passing on his wisdom to young golfers at a special event held at Formby Hall Golf Resort.

The world number 9, from Southport, delighted junior players from The Lancashire Union of Golf Clubs when he gave them tips on their technique.

Tommy came through the age group ranks of Lancashire in his early golfing career and was crowned the 2008 Lancashire Champion before going on to win the 2017 Race to Dubai European Order of Merit and this year became a Ryder Cup hero.

He was keen to take the chance to share his experience with the latest generation of County Juniors and answered a wide range of questions.

Tommy said during the day: "To be able to talk about my career so far with the kids has been a great experience. I hope they have learned so much and benefited from me speaking to them about the game.

"It's been great to see some old faces who are part of the County and they've all helped me so much in becoming who I am today.

"We all need world class planning, preparation and organisation. I hope the lads have taken this on board and it's been a pleasure to speak to them. After all, Lancashire is my county and I always want them to win!"

The clinic was held at Formby Hall Golf Resort, where Fleetwood is a past member and occasionally plays with his dad Pete when on a break from both the PGA and European tours.

Leading Lancashire Coaches Gareth Benson and Ian Lee hosted the event alongside Fleetwood, and they too thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

Benson added: "Tommy is a role model for all junior golfers and we hope they'll take a great deal away from this experience and benefit from Tommy's advice".

Lee said: "For Tommy to take time out of his busy schedule to come and speak with the team has been fantastic. We are so lucky to have him associated with the County."

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Students enjoy festive fun

College uses festive spirit to support charity

WINSTANLEY College held a festive celebration during the last week of term.

They enjoyed a bundle of festive treats including Christmas Jumper Day, a sing-a-long staff meeting, sports tournaments, the Winnie Christmas Quiz and most importantly, the annual Winter Wonderland event.

On Wednesday, December 19, their Student Union unveiled a wonderland of stalls, games, sweets, mince pies and Christmassy cheer, all accompanied by college bands playing a selection of their favourite Christmas classics.

Their festive fun week is all done in the name of charity and this year they have been raising money for: Save the Children, The Brick and Cancer Research.

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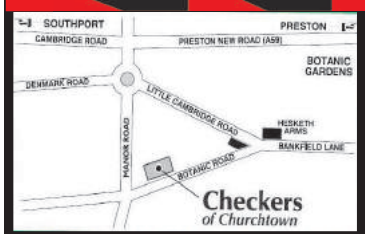

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MP backs plans to ban banks charging 'rip-off' overdraft fees

PROPOSALS to ban banks from charging rip-off unarranged overdraft fees that regularly penalised the most vulnerable customers and cost some people thousands of pounds a year have been welcomed by West Lancashire MP Rosie Cooper.

Ms Cooper joined with consumer champion Which? and over 80 fellow parliamentarians in May in signing a letter calling on the Financial Conduct Authority to bring an end to these "excessive charges".

The FCA announced that banks will no longer be able to charge higher prices for people who go over their arranged overdraft limit, in radical new proposals set down by the UK's financial watchdog.

Ms Cooper said: "We often hear of strict regulation for payday lenders and cracking down on loansharks when the reality is, as the research indicates, much debt and stress can be caused by our high street banks.

"Overdraft fees can be the first step in spiralling into a vicious debt circle which can lead people to resort to credit cards, payday lenders and worse. We need our banks to be responsible and support customers to climb out of debt not increase it.

"I very much welcome this announcement from the Financial Conduct Authority."

Jenni Allen, managing director, Which? Money, said: "The regulator must now ensure these important changes are swiftly introduced and enforced to finally stop this unfair practice and put an end to these excessive fees."

County Councillor Graham Gooch, Cabinet Member for Adult Services.

Cancer support service helping working locals

A SERVICE that provides work-related support for people living with cancer has helped more than 70 people since April this year.

The Wellbeing and Employment service, run by Lancashire County Council, aims to support people living with cancer who want to continue in employment or to find a job.

The service supports people by providing information on employment rights, drawing up return to work plans, and helping people access further education, as well as offering more general advice.

It was revamped last April to address other issues that can affect people living with cancer such as mental health issues.

County Councillor Graham Gooch, cabinet member for adult services, said: "Cancer-related illnesses have been identified as one of the most common causes of long-term sickness absence.

"However many people with cancer, or who have had cancer, want to continue to work or return to employment.

"They see work as an important way of maintaining normality during a difficult time, and for some it may be a financial necessity.

"Our trained employment experts can help with anything from ensuring you know your employment rights and freshening up your CV, to helping you search for available jobs, or finding further education courses to help you learn new skills.

"We're here to help anyone affected by cancer who wants to stay in employment.

"You can find out more about our wellbeing and employment service by visiting our employment support webpage (www.lancashire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/cancer-and-work/), emailing employment.services@lancashire.gov.uk or calling 01772 537468.

"This service is funded by NHS England through the Cancer Alliance, one of the key partners we work with to deliver the service."

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Charity marks 20 years of saving lives of destitute African children by thanking local supporters

Report by **Kenny Parker**

A CHARITY co-founded by a nun from Parbold, which provides a home and schooling for destitute children and orphans in the African Congo, has thanked its West Lancs supporters on the eve of its 20th anniversary.

The Gorsilaure Project was originally formed in 1998 after Sister Margaret Rose Scullion, of Convent of Notre Dame on Lancaster Lane, Parbold, experienced the devastating effects of war on the people of the Congo, and is run by Father Simon Lumbela at the Gorsilaure Children's Village in Qinsantu, Bas-Congo.

It also has a hospital with maternity and surgical units, as well as overseeing farming, food production and manufacturing schemes.

Margaret has written a book about the charity, Glimpses of God, as yet unpublished, but in a brochure marking the 20 years since she sought help to set the project up, she relates many of the success stories of children whose lives have been saved by the project.

The orphaned and destitute children have been cared for and given an education to secondary level, with ten of them even going on to university.

The 76-year-old nun, who spent three years in the Congo, tells of how watching a two-year old child called Gordon nearly die from malaria and yellow fever set her on a path to seeking help to start the project up.

She says she went on a "rampage with God" and then prayed after seeing Gordon is hospital.

Sister Margaret Scullion who helped set up the Gorsilaure Project in Congo.

She said:"How could He be a God of love when beautiful little innocents like Gordon were being subjected to such horrendous suffering.

"In the amazing calm that followed my outburst, I had a vibrant awareness of not only being in the presence of God our Father but of being surrounded by His love – and I was given to understand two things.

"The first was that our Father understood my pain completely and the second was that I could never begin to understand His pain.

"He had created our beautiful planet with enough for all of his children, and it was humankind, not God who had messed everything up through selfishness and greed."

Hospital staff were said to be amazed when Gordon pulled though but he sadly died within a year from a snake bite due to a lack of footwear.

His brother Aristote, who was given a home with Gorsilaure was more fortunate, however.

Now in his early 20s Aristote is studying law at a prestigious university in the Congo.

Margaret said the support the charity receives sustains the children's hope.

She said: "On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Gorsilaure Project, we thank all our benefactors, those brothers and sisters who have worked so tirelessly to provide the poor children of the Congo with a home, schooling, clothing, food and healthcare.

"We say 'thank you' to you and want these simple words to be an expression of the profound gratitude we have in our hearts.

"For us, you have been a veritable sign of God's own love for the poor. We ask God to grant you grace and happiness. God bless you all."

To donate to The Gorsilaure Project contact finance officer Peter Harding on 01383 822540 or 07963 606 677.

Alternatively, people can donate directly to the charity's bank: Royal Bank of Scotland, sort code 832901 and account number 00684017.

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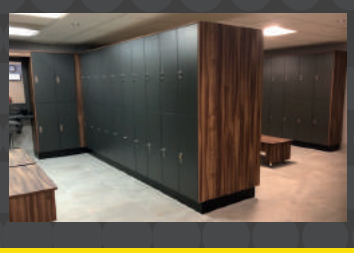

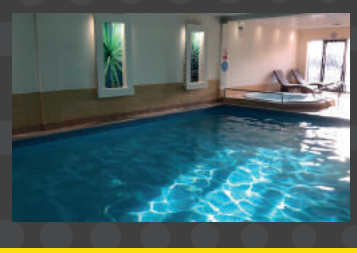
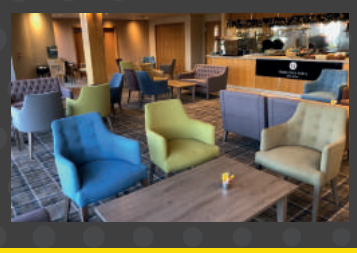

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Maghull Cheshire Lines Hub Slimming World Consultants are worth their weight in gold, says TV host

As Slimming World enters its 50th year, a group of Slimming World Consultants from Maghull are celebrating half a century of success for the organisation by meeting TV personality and presenter Rylan Clark-Neal.

Rylan, who shot to fame after appearing on hit show The X-Factor, co-hosted the annual Slimming World Awards with the organisation's founder and chair Margaret Miles-Bramwell OBE. Margaret opened her first Slimming World group in 1969 and over the last 50 years the business has grown to become the UK's leading group-based weight-management organisation, today supporting nearly 1 million slimmers.

The team, who run Slimming World groups in Cheshire Lines, were delighted to get a chance to cuddle up to Rylan. Sue Culligan said meeting the TV host was a wonderful way to round off a great year for the Slimming World, as well as a brilliant way to lead into 2019 — Slimming World's Golden Year: "I couldn't be more proud of our members. Not only have they lost fantastic amounts of weight throughout 2018 – with many of them hitting their target weights – they've also improved their health, boosted their confidence and are heading into 2019 with new healthy habits that will stay with them for life.

"Watching people change before my eyes and start being able to do things that they didn't think were possible before losing weight absolutely amazes me. Every week I feel privileged to play even a small part in people's achievements and to celebrate with them, so I felt especially honoured to represent our Slimming World groups at the Slimming World Awards. Rylan was blown away by the difference Slimming World makes to people's lives too."

Rylan, who is now a seasoned presenter having appeared on This Morning and Channel 5's Big Brother's Little Brother, said he was thrilled to be invited to host the awards ceremony, which was held at Birmingham's International Convention Centre. He said: "I met so many people who had lost incredible amounts of weight and made a huge difference to their lives. While the stories I heard were obviously very personal, the one thing they all had in common was how much support they received from their 'Slimming World family' and how so many of them were achieving their dreams. Every one of them spoke passionately about how they couldn't have made those changes to eat more healthily and become more active without the support of their Consultant and group every week. It's clear that the people who run the groups each week are worth their weight in gold."

Gill Foden continues: "2018 has been a brilliant year for Slimming World. We've launched our Slim for Life plan to give even more support to our target members and won awards for both our magazine and food range. We're hoping our Golden Year will be even more successful and we have a string of exciting activities planned to celebrate our 50th birthday in style, including the launch of brand-new websites and apps, golden events and special publications.

"So, this New Year I truly believe that joining a local Slimming World group is the best way for people to lose weight, learn new habits and make long-term healthy changes. Thanks to our eating plan they'll see big results on the scales without ever having to feel hungry or deprived, and at the Liverpool groups they'll discover a whole world of support and advice that's sure to help them achieve their targets – and have a lot of fun along the way too! I'd love for anyone who wants to make a change to join us I promise they won't look back!"

To make your weight-loss dreams come true and go for gold with Slimming World in its Golden Year call 0344 897 8000 or visit www.slimmingworld.co.uk to find your nearest group.

DUE TO POPULAR DEMAND...

An award winning Slimming World consultant opens the only Tuesday evening group in West Lancashire

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Senior Slimming World Consultant Tina Whewell, who has ran groups for more than 25 years says: "When members first join our Slimming World group, I make a commitment. I promise to do everything in my power to help them to reach their target. I let them know I'll be there for them, and I mean it.

So when I discovered there was a need for a Tuesday evening group in West Lancashire I felt I had no choice but to open a group then. I'm so excited and looking forward to helping and supporting even more members in 2019.

"At our groups we swap healthy recipe ideas, share strategies for tackling the inevitable challenges that life can bring, celebrate everyone's achievements – big and small – and help one another to get back on track if we do have any setbacks. By being there no matter what, we're keeping our promise to help members achieve their weight loss dreams.

Tina's groups are now held every TUESDAY EVENING 5.30pm and 7.30pm, WEDNESDAY MORNINGS 9.30am and 7.30pm and SATURDAY MORNINGS at 7.30am and 9.30am.

If you want any further information you can contact Tina on 07855 097585.

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The Ashurst Centre, Lyndhurst
9am & 11am
Sue: 07817 444580

ASHURST, SKELMERSDALE
The Ashurst Centre, Lyndhurst
3.30pm, 5.30pm & 7.30pm
Sue: 07817 444580

MAGHULL
Cheshire Lines, Sefton Lane
(behind Fun Factor)
6.30pm
Michelle: 07931 125172

OLD ROAN
The Hope Centre (behind Tesco),
Aintree Lane
9.30am & 11.30am
Victoria: 07766 136641

OLD ROAN
The Hope Centre (behind Tesco),
Aintree Lane
5pm & 7pm
Victoria: 07766 136641

OLD SKELMERSDALE
The Cricket Club, Blaguegate Lane
5pm & 7pm
Paula: 07484 263698

TUESDAY
CHESHIRE LINES
Sefton Lane (behind Fun Factor)
5pm & 7pm
Sheila: 07827 335824

OLD SKELMERSDALE
The Cricket Club, Blaguegate Lane
9am & 11am
Paula: 07484 263698

WEDNESDAY
MELLING
Melling Residents Community Association
(Ratepayers Club) Melling
5pm & 7pm
Katie: 07469 193445

MAGHULL
Cheshire Lines, Sefton Lane
(behind Fun Factor)
9.30am
Sheila: 07827 335824

ORMSKIRK
Ormskirk Rugby Club,
Green Lane
9.30 & 11.30am
Tina: 0151 548 4266

ORMSKIRK
Ormskirk Rugby Club,
Green Lane
5.30 & 7.30pm
Tina: 0151 548 4266
MOVING TO TUESDAY from 8th January

MAGHULL
Cheshire Lines, Sefton Lane
(behind Fun Factor)
4.30 & 6.30pm
Emma: 07414 223 617

UP HOLLAND
UpHolland Methodist Church,
Alma Hill
9.30am
Sarah: 07969 395302

UP HOLLAND
UpHolland Methodist Church,
Alma Hill
3.30, 5.30 & 7.30pm
Sarah: 07969 395302

BURSCOUGH
Burscough Cricket Club
School Lane
3.30pm, 5.30 & 7.30pm
Kathy: 07815 199346

THURSDAY
AUGHTON
Aughton Village Hall, Winifred Lane
8.00am & 10.00am
Zoe: 01695 580 966

AUGHTON
Scout and Guide Hut
(behind Christ Church), Long Ln
5.30 & 7.30pm
Zoe: 01695 580 966

MAGHULL
Cheshire Lines, Sefton Lane
(behind Fun Factor)
3.00pm 5:00pm & 7.00pm
Sue: 07957 531346

DIGMOOR, SKELMERSDALE
Digmoor Community Centre,
Birleywood
9.30am, 11.30am
Sarah: 07792 146342

DIGMOOR, SKELMERSDALE
Digmoor Community Centre,
Birleywood
4.30pm & 6.30pm
Sarah: 07792 146342

FRIDAY
ORMSKIRK
New Pavilion
Ormskirk Cricket Club, Altys Lane
9am
Zoe: 01695 580966

MAGHULL
Cheshire Lines, Sefton Lane
(behind Fun Factor)
9:30am & 11:30am
Sue: 07957 531346

SATURDAY
KIRKBY
St. Martins Church
Peatwood Avenue
7.30am & 9.30am
Emma: 07414 223617

OLD SKELMERSDALE
Greenhill Community Room
Beech Close
(Off Lancaster Cres)
8am & 10am
Sarah: 07969 395302

ORMSKIRK
Ormskirk Rugby Club, Green Lane
7.30am & 9.30am
Tina: 0151 548 4266

ORMSKIRK
St Anne's School, Aughton Street
8.30am, 10.30am & 12.30pm
Sue: 07817 444580

MAGHULL
Cheshire Lines
Sefton Lane (behind Fun Factor)
8.30am & 10.30am
Gill: 07921 222405

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Seventy 'excess' winter deaths recorded in West Lancashire

Report by **Henry James**

THERE were 70 'excess' winter deaths in West Lancashire during 2016/17, the most recent data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) has revealed.

Excess winter deaths are defined as those that occurred in the winter period, December to March, compared with the average number of deaths occurring in the preceding August to November and the following April to July.

Regional level figures for 2017/2018 have also been released by the ONS showing that there were 6,800 excess winter deaths across the North West as a whole, while for the same winter period, there were an estimated 50,100 excess winter deaths in England and Wales.

West Lancashire MP Rosie Cooper has pledged to help end the misery of cold homes in the North West.

MP Rosie Cooper said: "I am backing National Energy Action's Warm and Safe Homes Campaign to fight fuel poverty this winter. It is an important issue that we simply cannot ignore here in West Lancashire or across the country.

"Living in a cold home can lead to problems for families and many others including ill health, especially in those who are vulnerable such as older people, young children, and those with long-term sickness and disabilities.

"Cold homes, and the misery and ill health they create need to be eradicated, especially for the most vulnerable in our society. We know the causes, the consequences and the cures but we risk neglecting millions of people that could be helped with immediate and practical solutions."

Nick Stripe, health analysis and life events, officer for National Statistics, said: "The number of excess winter deaths in England and Wales in 2017 to 2018 was the highest recorded since the winter of 1975 to 1976.

Temperatures plummeting have not helped with illnesses

"However, peaks like these are not unusual - we have seen more than eight peaks during the last 40 years. It is likely that last winter's increase was due to the predominant strain of flu, the effectiveness of the influenza vaccine and below-average winter temperatures."

The ONS said the number of deaths per day in 2017 to 2018 exceeded the daily five-year average for all days during the winter months with the exception of March 25.

It stated these increases could be explained partly by temperature, as colder weather was observed in December, February and March compared with the five-year average.

Bells chiming for residents

THE bells were ringing as residents of Burscough's Beaufort Nursing Home were serenaded with seasonal songs by a local choir.

The Consolette Choir was formed in September of last year by accomplished pianist and music teacher, Joanne Fairclough, who also plays piano for Aughton Male Voice Choir. The group sing a broad range of music styles but when they attended the nursing home on High Lane, residents were treated to renditions of festive songs.

The Consolette Choir meets for rehearsals at the Stanley Club, Liverpool Road North, Burscough, on Tuesday nights from 7.30 to 9.30pm and will resume after the holidays on January 8.

For more information, contact Joanne on 07791 461739 or 01794 896824.

Youngsters learn about role of West Lancs MP

WEST Lancs MP Rosie Cooper enjoyed meeting with pupils, parents, staff and governors when she paid a visit to Mossy Lea Primary School in Wrightington *(left)*.

She said: "Mossy Lea is a beautiful 'small school' at the heart of the local village community, it was a pleasure to meet with all the children and talk to them about my role as an MP."

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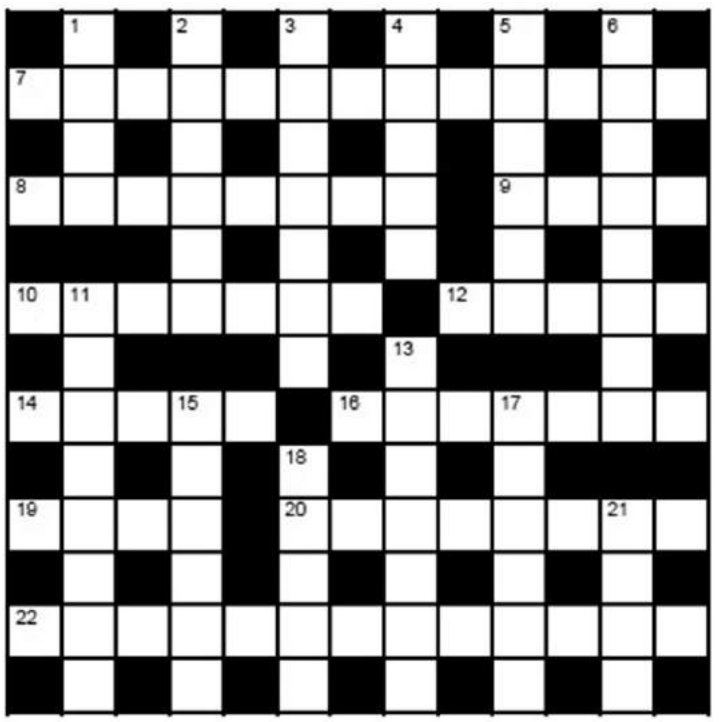

Last week's solutions:

Across: 7. Valour. 8. Noodle. 9. Cash. 10. Gold leaf. 11. Sea wall. 13. Foray. 15. Taser. 17. Turmoil. 20. Repeated. 21. Sofa. 22. Eczema. 23. War cry.

Down: 1. Facade. 2. Cosh. 3. Fragile. 4. Knoll. 5. Bollworm. 6. Alpaca. 12. Whenever. 14. Put-down. 16. Agency. 18. Infirm. 19. Attar. 21. Sore.

ACROSS

7. Person who aspires to get into a group of people he thinks are higher class (6,7)
8. A plant with red, pink, or white flowers, often grown in containers and gardens (8)
9. A religious or other solemn ceremony or act (4)
10. Opposite or contrary in position, direction, order, or effect (7)
12. A tough, lightweight, elastic synthetic polymer with a protein-like chemical structure, able to be produced as filaments, sheets, or moulded objects (5)
14. A mollusc with a single spiral shell into which the whole body can be withdrawn (5)
16. A person who does not easily admit defeat in spite of difficulties or opposition (7)
19. Any plant with leaves, seeds, or flowers used for flavouring, food, medicine, or perfume (4)
20. The science of improving a population by controlled breeding to increase the occurrence of desirable heritable characteristics (8)
22. A feeling of pride and mutual loyalty shared by the members of a group (6,2,5)

DOWN

1. Called out as a warning to people in the path of a golf ball (4)
2. The number of lines in printed or written matter, especially when used to calculate payment (6)
3. A regular oval shape, traced by a point moving in a plane so that the sum of its distances from two other points (the foci) is constant (7)
4. A domesticated pack animal of the camel family found in the Andes, valued for its soft woolly fleece (5)
5. Ingratiating and wheedling in a way that is regarded as insincere or excessive (6)
6. Form of glucose (8)
11. Spoken or written words that have no meaning (8)
13. A lock of hair hanging in a corkscrew-shaped curl (7)
15. Existing from birth (6)
17. A two-wheeled horse-drawn cab accommodating two inside, with the driver seated behind (6)
18. An area of open uncultivated land, typically on acid sandy soil, with characteristic vegetation of heather, gorse, and coarse grasses (5)
21. Head coverings especially with visors and no brims (4)

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Slimmmer is winner at losing game after shedding 11 stone

Report by **Henry James**

SUPER slimmer Caroline Holder is proving to be a winner at the losing game after shedding more than 11st and seven dress sizes.

Caroline from Ormskirk said: "I feel like a new woman since losing weight I am now the person I always was on the inside rather than the facade I put on – in fact, I look so different that people who I haven't seen for a while often can't believe I'm the same person.

"For me though it's the change on the inside that's been the biggest – I'm happier, healthier and much more confident now."

The proud 40 year old joined her local group in February 2017.

She said: "I'd pretend it didn't bother me that I was bigger than most other people, but that was far from the truth. I hated shopping for clothes and found just climbing up stairs and doing simple everyday tasks would leave me tired and out of breath."

Caroline's weight was also putting a huge strain on her health, she found it difficult to walk and got breathless easily. People who are severely overweight, with a BMI above 30, are more likely to suffer from health problems like coronary heart disease, arthritis, diabetes and cancer, and obesity is linked to a reduction in life expectancy of between seven and nine years.

Caroline decided to join Slimming World in Ormskirk after feeling unhealthy and knowing being so overweight was having a severe impact on her life.

She said: "Walking through those doors was one of the hardest things I've ever done, I was embarrassed about my size and scared that I might be the biggest person there.

"I needn't have worried though, everyone there was so friendly especially my consultant and I was so relieved when I found out that my weight was confidential between me and her – I'd had visions of having to tell everyone how much I weighed!"

Since joining she has made so many friends at her group and admits she doesn't think she could have done it without their support each week.

Caroline Holder shows off her weight loss

They've been helped with recipes and tips and if she was ever struggling her fellow members were always there to remind her why they wanted to lose weight in the first place and how far she'd come since first stepping through the doors.

She followed the club's Extra Easy eating plan and swapped high fat and sugary meals for normal every day meals just cooked in a different way.

Tina Whewell, Caroline's consultant added: "The changes we've seen in Caroline are incredible. I hope her success will inspire other people in West Lancashire who'd like to lose weight by forming new lifestyle habits and become happier and healthier to take action."

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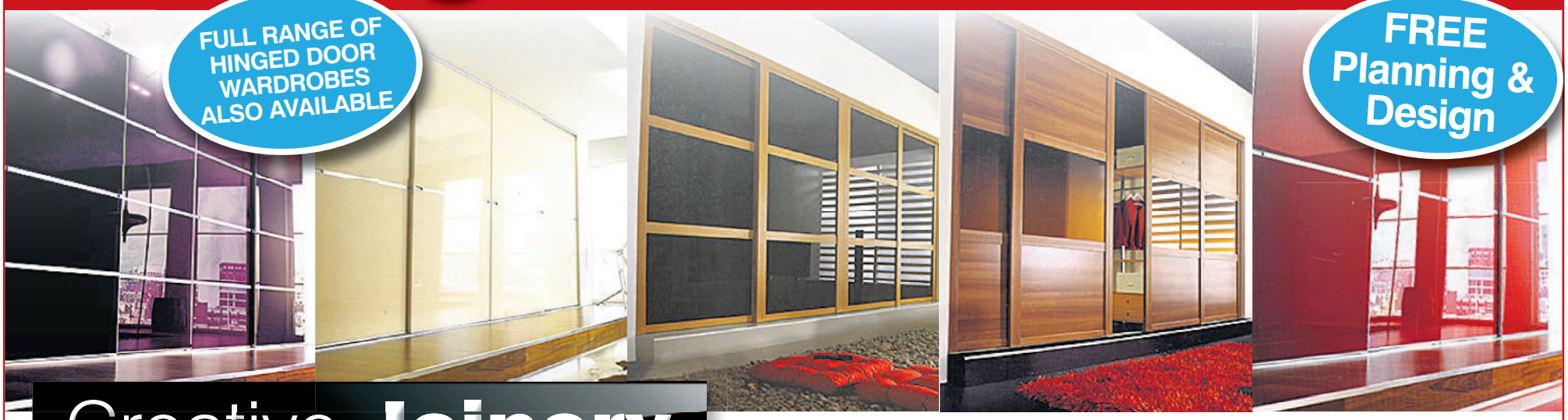

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Generous bank staff dig deep for Liberty Centre donation

STAFF at the Co-operative Bank HQ at Delf House in Skelmersdale have chipped in with another bumper effort for a local charity.

Throughout November and December employees at the office in Southway collected gifts for The Liberty Centre which provides support for victims of domestic abuse.

Among the items donated were new toys, games, books and gift sets for all ages - including adults parents and carers.

The Liberty Centre is a local charity working within the Skelmersdale community.

A spokesperson for the Liberty Centre said: "Domestic violence can take place within an intimate or family-type relationship and can form a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour. Domestic violence may include a range of abusive behaviours, not all of which are in themselves inherently 'violent'.

"You and your children have the right to live in safety. You should not be scared to live in your own home. Your partner does not have the right to dominate and control you."

It takes more than a power cut to stop us enjoying ourselves during Christmas celebrations

TALK about the best laid schemes of mice and men - well over the festive period they certainly 'ganged aglay' so far as this man was concerned.

All was going splendidly on Christmas Day morning.

I had just put the phone down after wishing two friends a Merry day and was just telling dogs Tina and Cinders that we would start preparing our Christmas lunch at about noon - when suddenly my little world was plunged into darkness.

The lights went out, the radio stayed on - but stopped charging - and it dawned upon me that it had happened again.

You may remember about two and a half years ago when my home became bereft of electricity.

Well it happened again - though it has now been fixed by a kind electrician.

Anyway, I was actually able to roast my festive duck and all its trimmings, as thankfully a light remained on in the kitchen as well.

So since we always have our Christmas lunch and tea in candlelight anyway, that all went well, if somewhat later than planned.

Now I have a crafty plan which I think will restore lights, TV and landline phone to operational status - the only slight fly in that ointment is that there is just the chance that my action immediately will blow the main fuse again and I shall lose the use of my cooker, and the means to recharge my laptop currently running on battery power, as are my mobile phone and radio.

And since I really don't want completely to ruin what's left of my New Year's Eve celebrations I have made the executive decision safely to leave this plan on the shelf until after January 1.

I have just returned from my first post-Christmas shopping expedition, brought on by a distinct shortage of dog food.

Having bought that at my usual supermarket I had a poke around to see what post-Christmas bargains human food-wise I could find.

And to my delight I came across a half-price Beef Wellington.

I had never tasted one of these before so I treated myself while I still had the means to cook it, and looked forward to a splendid evening meal.

Tell you what - I'm very glad I didn't find it in time for Christmas lunch.

I followed the cooking instructions to the letter, which of course meant the beef was somewhat well done for my taste - but my complaint was that this slab of beef would have made a splendid tread for the tyres of a heavy lorry. 'Disappointed' is hardly the word for it.

I suppose the only thing for it now is to order this delicacy in a pukka restaurant and find out what it should really be like. Don't misunderstand me - even given the woe that befell us, Tina, Cinders and I enjoyed what we cobbled together of our traditional celebrations.

It takes more than a miserable power cut to stop us enjoying ourselves.

And though I am not one usually to make New Year resolutions, I have made one for 2019.

That is to make next Christmas the best we've had since we've been left to our own devices - and perhaps just a tad more forward planning would be a good idea too - that way I could enjoy my coffee and cheeseboard at the close of the meal - difficult if like me this time round, you forgot to buy any cheese!

Anyway, can I wish each and every one of my readers a happy and prosperous New Year, with good health and, if you have them, good dogs!

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Fab Four museum expanding

A MUSEUM dedicated to the Fab Four is expanding to open a café and bar after enjoying a bumper first six months.

Staff at The Magical Beatles Museum hopes the new facilities, together with the relocation of the Liverpool Tourist Information Centre to its Mathew Street building in November, will further boost visitor numbers.

The attraction was launched by Roag Best, brother of 'fifth Beatle' Pete Best, with support of a tailored funding package from Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking.

Having secured and renovated the five-story Victorian Warehouse where the museum is based, Best now hopes to boost visitors by at least 70 per cent over the next 12 months, creating 20 new jobs.

The concept takes visitors on an interactive tour of Beatles history, with Roag's 1,200 item personal collection telling the story each step of the way.

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Former Verve guitarist appears on second album

Report by **Henry James**

The Good, The Bad and The Queen (Simon Tong is shown third from left). Photo by Pennie Smith

THE band, The Good, The Bad and The Queen, which includes Simon Tong who lived in Skelmersdale as a teenager, has released a new album.

Tong, who is a former guitarist and keyboard player with the Verve, is involved in the band with Damon Albarn, The Clash's Paul Simonon, and Fela Kuti drummer Tony Allen.

The new album is called Merrie Land and is the band's second. Their first album was called The Good, The Bad & The Queen and was released at the start of 2007.

The album contains 10 new songs and the group has said it has been written, "during the current period in which the UK is preparing to leave the European Union – creating a reluctant good-bye letter, a series of observations and reflections on Britishness in 2018.

"Merrie Land's focus moves beyond GBQ's London-themed first album to a wider land, with a beautiful and hopeful paean to the Britain of today, an inclusive Britain, currently in an Anglo-Saxostentialist crises at the end of a relationship, wondering what might be salvaged.

"Could there be a more perfect band – with their creative symbiosis of pasts and present and shared acclaimed music histories – to reflect on the anticipation, disorientation and confusion of current life."

The band have been touring and were playing shows in Blackpool, Glasgow and London in December.

The 46-year-old Tong, who was a member of The Verve from 1996 to 1999, had moved to Skelmersdale from Bolton in 1984. Tong played at the E Rooms in Skelmersdale in 2016 with another of his bands called The Magnetic North.

Comedian goes from living with his gran to performing sell out shows

LAUGH Out Loud Comedy Club returns to the Atkinson on Saturday, January 5 at 8pm.

On the bill will be Paul Pirie, Barry Dodds, Njambi McGrath and the MC will be Damion Larkin.

Paul Pirie (shown left) began his stand-up career after giving up acting to pursue the funny man that lies within, quickly establishing himself on the Scottish comedy circuit as long ago as 2004.

It should be pointed out that at the time he was living with his gran, having given away the keys to his flat in a pub quiz.

Soon after that he was awarded runner up in the prestigious annual awards for Scottish Comedian of the Year making him the (second) funniest comedian in Scotland.

Since then he's gone from strength to strength and right now is on fire enjoying the best comedic form of his life.

A spokesman for Laugh out Loud Comedy Club said: "Paul is a brilliant natural comedian, packed full of energy, he uses every ounce to maximum effect with superb delivery.

"Audiences are never more than a line away from a great pun, insight or well crafted punch line, delivered with a ferocity that makes his humble beginnings on the Scottish circuit seem such a long time ago."

Paul's career has encompassed TV, Film and Radio alongside his skills as a stand-up, and he is now one of the biggest Scottish acts on the UK comedy circuit.

A confident and intelligent comedian who makes it his mission to work and entertain his audience, his material has been described as superbly individual which delivers a refreshing burst of laugh out loud comedy that leaves audiences in raptures.

It has been said he has a physical, theatrical presence on stage, and that his sharp, rapid-fire comedy onslaught is packed with highly entertaining material, which blurs the lines between real-life anecdotes and flight of fancy.

It's been observed that he channels the late Robin Williams at his most excitable.

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BIRTHDAY MEMORIAMS

RIGBY JAMIE (JAY)

To our 'Forever Friend Jay'

You are always in our hearts and thoughts, especially on your birthday.
We love and miss you always.

Your Forever Friends
Joan & Jimmy
and Jo & Jay
xxxx

DRAPER NELL

(Nee Wilson)
2nd January 1955 - 20th August 2018
64 Years on the 2nd January 2019

My Beautiful, Caring, Brave Wife.
Love and Miss, my Best Friend more, each day and will do for the rest of my life.
Amazing Wife and Mother to Adele & Laura,
Grand Mother to Alexa & Ethan and Mother in Law to Paul & David.
All our Love Nell
it hurts so much

Stan
XXX

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DEATHS

LIPTROTT VALERIE (VAL)

23rd December 2018

Peacefully at Kingsley Care Home, Birkdale Village. Loving Mum to Neill, Nanny to Isobel and Riley, Partner to Jim, Mother in law to Clare and great friend to many. Forever loved and missed. Funeral service at St Andrew's Church, Maghull on Thursday January 3rd 2019 at 11:00 am followed by burial at St Andrew's Churchyard. Family flowers only please but donations, if desired for Cancer Research UK c/o Graham J Clegg Funeral Service, 7 Dover Road, Maghull, Merseyside L31 5JB Tel: 0151 520 3330.

DEATHS

TAYLOR HENRY (HARRY)

Passed away peacefully at home on 17th December 2018 aged 80 years

Dearly beloved Husband of Audrey. Dear Dad of Steven and Helen. Dear Father-in-law of Michael and Kim. Caring Granddad of Imogen, Nathan and Phillippa. Funeral Service and Committal will take place at West Lancashire Crematorium on Thurday 10th January 2019 at 10am. Family flowers only please, but donations are being gratefully received by the family for Queenscourt Hospice Further enquiries please to Cookson Tyrer Funeral Directors, 2 Smithy Walk, Burscough, Lancashire L40 5UU Tel 01704 897770.

DOBSON WILLIAM THOMAS (BILL)

Passed away on 20th December 2018 aged 91 years

Dearly loved Husband of Rosemary. Much loved Brother in law, Uncle and great Uncle. Funeral Service and Committal will take place at West Lancashire Crematorium on Wednesday 9th January 2019 at 11.30am. Family flowers only please, but donations are being gratefully received by the family for Arthritis Research UK. Further enquiries please to Cookson Tyrer Funeral Directors, 2 Smithy Walk, Burscough, Lancashire L40 5UU Tel 01704 897770

DEATHS

SHAW WILLIAM STEWART MENZIES (BILL)

Passed away on 26th December 2018 aged 91 years

Dearly loved Husband of Rene, Brother of Margaret, Helen and Families, and Beloved Uncle to Susan and her Family in the Netherlands, and Nieces and Nephews in Scotland
Will be sadly missed by his dear Friends Sheryl and Annette.
Loved and missed by all his family and friends. Funeral Service at West Lancs Crematorium on Tuesday 8th January 2019 at 1.00 pm
Family flowers only please by request, but donations are being gratefully received for Dementia UK.

Donations and further enquires please to April Hunter MLS Independent Funeral Directors 20, Moss Delph Lane, Aughton Tel: 01695 424888.

WHALLEY JOHN (JACK)

15th December 2018
Peacefully in hospital aged 98 years

Loving Husband of the late Gladys, devoted Dad, Grandad and Great Grandad. Will be sadly missed by all his family and friends. Funeral service will take place at St Pauls Church on Tuesday 8th January at 12.30pm followed by committal at West Lancashire Crematorium.
Family flowers only please by request. Donations if desired for Alzheimers Society.
All enquiries to Margaret Whitelam Skelmersdale Funeral Service 29/31 Sandy Lane Tel: 01695 559868

DEATHS

WINDER JOAN

15th December 2018
Aged 92 years

Passed away peacefully at home after a long illness. Dear Wife of the late Walter and latterly, Ron. Much loved Mum of Ruth, Gran of Ryan, Scott, Liam, Jo, Lisa and Granny of Ruby Millie and Charlie. Dear Sister of Brian and the late Freda and Leslie. Joan will be greatly missed by all her family and friends. Service at Southport Crematorium on Monday 7th January at 11:20am. Donations are being collected in lieu of flowers for Queenscourt Hospice. Enquiries to Howard's Funeral Directors, 1-5 Roe Lane, Southport, PR9 9DR. Telephone: 01704 500086.

UNDERWOOD ARTHUR

22nd December 2018
Passed away peacefully in hospital aged 83 years of Southport

Much Loved Dad of Russell, Paul, Wallace, Kevin and Carol, and the late Christine, Wayne and Gary, and a loving Grandad, Great-Grandad and Brother. Funeral Service at Southport Crematorium on Monday 7th January at 12.40pm. Family flowers only please, but donations if so desired for The Stroke Association.

Donations and further enquiries please to Sally Hunter MLS Independent Funeral Directors, 20, Moss Delph Lane, Aughton, Ormskirk, Tel: 01695 424888

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DEATHS

GLEAVES CATHERINE (CATHLEEN)

Died peacefully in Warren Park Care Home, Blundellsands on 9th December 2018 Aged 72 years

Dearly beloved Sister of Bernard, Rose, Joan and the late Harry, loving Auntie to Anne, Victoria, Sarah, Carolyn, Julie and John. Funeral service to be held at St. Joseph's Church, Blundellsands on Friday 4th January 2019 at 11.00am followed by burial at Ford Cemetery at 12.15pm. Her nature was loving and giving. Her heart was made of pure gold. To us who truly loved her, her memory will never grow old. Reunited with Mam and Dad. All enquiries to H.Leslie Humphreys, 69 Liverpool Road, Crosby, Liverpool L23 5SE. Tel 0151 924 4805

DELAUNEY GEOFFREY CYRIL

20th December 2018
Aged 93 years

Died peacefully at Kemp Lodge. Loving Husband of Beryl and much loved Father of Mel and Guy and Grandchildren. He will be greatly missed. Funeral service at St Luke's Church, Crosby on Friday 4th January 2019 at 2.45pm followed by cremation at West Lancashire Crematorium. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to Kemp Lodge c/o H.Leslie Humphreys, 69 Liverpool Road, Crosby, Liverpool L23 5SE. Telephone 0151 924 4805.

To place a family **announcement** please call one of our team on **01704 392392** or visit **champnews.com**

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IN MEMORIAM

FRAMPTON CAROLE

Some broken hearts never mend, some memories never end, some tears will never dry, our love for you will never die.
Love from all the family, we love and miss you

ELLIS PATRICIA

4th January 2018

God wanted you, he only takes the best. Miss you my Sister, my best friend. Till we meet again. Sister Ethel and family

KAY ALBERT EDWARD JOSEPH

4th January 2010

We are sending a dove to Heaven, with a parcel on it's wings. Be careful when you open it, as it's full of beautiful things.

Inside are a million kisses, wrapped up in a million hugs, to say how much we miss you, and send you all our love.

We hold you close within our hearts, and there you will remain, to walk with us throughout our lives, until we meet again.

Always loved and sadly missed.

Your loving Wife Margaret, Daughters Shirley and Sandra, Son in laws Simon and Gregg and Grandchildren James, Ellie, Lydia and Clara.

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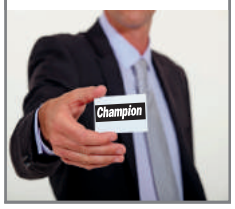

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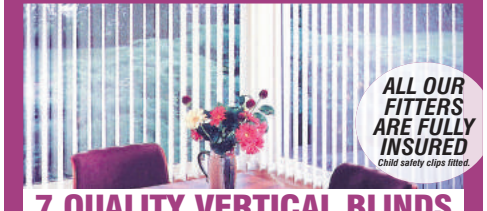

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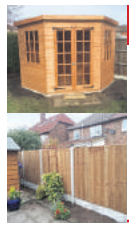

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Dashcams are great for fighting your corner in insurance disputes

TV over Christmas was skipped after I discovered dashcam YouTube videos

MY COPY of *Ronin* on DVD has gathered a bit more dust. The repeats of *The Sweeney* on ITV4 have missed out on another viewer. Everything but the omnipresent reruns of *Top Gear* on Dave have been given a miss in the long week between Christmas and New Year – because I've discovered dashcam videos on YouTube instead.

Which is a shame, because as automotive action goes they're almost always terrible. There is no Robert De Niro shooting at baddies from the sunroof of a Mercedes 450SEL 6.9 or Steve McQueen looking surly at the helm of a Mustang GT390 – but there is a clip of a chap in an MoT-expired BMW 318i driving the wrong way around a roundabout in Essex and brake-checking the film car because he's having an industrial bout of road rage.

Then there are the Vauxhall Insignias that sweep across all three lanes of a busy M6 without looking, the dented Peugeots that pull out in front of cyclists and the near-misses on country lanes. A couple of years ago I wrote about how YouTube was overflowing with Russian dashcam clips and that it'd only be a few years before Britain followed suit. Well, now it has, but there's a key difference between what passes for in-car terror in Moscow and automotive indignation in Maghull.

Watch the Made In Russia clips enough and you wouldn't be surprised if the Lada in question was taken out by a freak meteorite or an angry farmer branding a Kalashnikov, but I reckon in at least half of the UK clips the driver doing the filming is at least partly responsible. Our not-entirely-thrilling car chase with the BMW started because the 3-series pulled out a junction – but rather than slowing down, the driver with the dashcam puts his foot down, gets dangerously close and *then* blasts his horn. What happened to just muttering under your breath that he's a bit of an investment banker and getting on with it instead?

There are plenty of clips involving the camera car ploughing into a roundabout at 40mph and the driver screaming in pent-up rage because someone then pulls out in front of them – surely, you shouldn't be doing that speed into them anyway? Same goes for all the ones involving a heavy dose of country lane ABS because there just happens to be a tractor on the other side of the bend. In the past you'd be lucky to escape the encounter with a light telling-off, but nowadays you can turn the tables and stick the entire episode on YouTube instead.

Read the comments and the vast majority of the wrong 'uns get taken to task almost immediately, but I do genuinely wonder whether these clips – which are supposed to be sorting out insurance disputes, anyway – are making the problem worse, not better.

You could spend the £100 a half-decent dashcam costs making your own driving a bit better, but that won't get you a thumbs up on YouTube.

Or a thumbs down, for that matter.

David Simister is the editor of Classic Car Weekly

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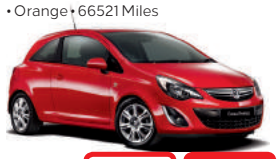

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Burscough remain unbeaten during festive fixture list

BURSCOUGH only had two games during the festive period but they emerged unbeaten after picking up two draws.

In fact, both the Linnets and Skelmersdale United failed to win a single game between them over Christmas.

Skem played three games and Burscough two games, both teams failed to register a win, Burscough being twice held to a draw, Skelmersdale losing all three, two by large margins. So there weren't too many smiles among the local rivals.

Skelmersdale were dealt a particularly tough hand of fixtures, playing three promotion chasing teams, losing 6-0 at Leek Town on Saturday, December 22, 5-1 to Prescot Cables on Boxing Day, then with a terrific performance 2-1 at Evo-Stik Division One West league leaders Runcorn Linnets on Saturday, December 29.

Burscough drew 2-2 away at in form Winsford United on Saturday, December 22 and 1-1 at home to Litherland Remyca in their Boxing Day derby.

Rather bizarrely Burscough had no game after Boxing Day until they play away to West Chorlton & Didsbury on Saturday, January 5.

At Leek Skelmersdale manager Paul McNally was faced with the nightmare scenario of having a host of enforced absentees for the trip to Staffordshire and his side made a good effort, only going behind three minutes before half-time before conceding three goals in the last quarter-hour.

Boxing Day brought the unusual situation of playing host to their landlords, who included three former Skem players in their starting eleven and three more on the bench,

Skem made a far better start and but for a couple of excellent saves by Prescot goalkeeper Ben Barnes they might well have taken the lead before conceding a goal to a set piece corner on 15 minutes.

However, a quick response followed by Skelmersdale, again going close twice before finally levelling via a thoroughly deserved first time side-footer by Davy Moore in the 20th minute.

Just after the half-hour Prescot took the lead again, with a similar goal to their opener, a near post header from a corner that was flicked back into the net.

Prescot pushed on after the restart and Skem held on fairly well, but were undone again by another header, this time from former Marine forward Mattie Hamilton on 58 minutes.

Further goals from Luke Griffiths (a header) and Lloyd Dean finished Skelmersdale off.

The 5-1 margin had arguably flattered Prescot, but on Saturday Skelmersdale put in a hugely improved showing at Runcorn, see Simon Driscoll's report on the game.

Burscough faced Winsford on the Saturday before Christmas, and the Cheshire side although in a lowly position had only lost once in their previous six games, so posed serious opposition.

Terry Green's team who found themselves a goal down at the interval then bounced back to take the lead with goals from Jordan Lorde and Chad Whyte, but were forced to settle for a point as Winsford equalised on 73 minutes.

Boxing Day saw Litherland Remyca visit Victoria Park for a first ever league meeting between the sides, it was always going to be a close game and matters were not helped from a Burscough perspective when they lost central defender Luke Gibson to a red card after only 15 minutes, due a mistimed last man tackle.

When Litherland took the lead on 51 minutes via Colin Quirk the Linnets task looked even more difficult but to their utmost credit they fought back and finally equalised on 87 minutes with a penalty from Chad Whyte.

The Whyte goal extended Burscough's unbeaten run to five and they end the year in a very creditable sixth place in the North-West Counties Premier Division table.

John Keatley scores for Skem

Stubborn Skem nearly pull off shock result away at league leaders

Report by **Neil Leatherbarrow**

Runcorn Linnets 2
Skelmersdale United 1

SKELMERSDALE United ended 2018 with a defeat but one which will give positives for 2019 after a narrow loss at league leading Runcorn Linnets.

Paul McNally welcomed John Keatley and Joel Douglas into the line-up after recent unavailability while handing an instant debut to Matthew Coughlan after he joined from Witton Albion in the week.

Runcorn who had five former Skelmersdale players in their starting eleven claimed the first chance of the afternoon as former Skem defender Louis Corrigan's curling free-kick in the opening minutes found the arms of goalkeeper Terry Smith.

Smith was called into action again in the fifth minute as he denied Freddie Potter's header from a corner, Paul Shanley flicking an effort towards the far post for Linnets with Smith stretching to claim the cross before claiming a similar effort from Corrigan minutes later and at the other end, a long range shot from James O'Hara saw Dylan Forth collect comfortably.

A long range shot from Matthew Coughlan on the half-hour mark took a wicked deflection by the Linnets defence who breathed a sigh of relief as the ball found goalkeeper Forth.

United should have opened the scoring on 34 minutes, a lofted Coughlan pass saw Ben Giverin cross low for Alex Griffiths who drew a superb stop from Forth from point-blank range with Joel Douglas' rebound blocked ahead of the line

Six minutes before the interval, Kurt Sherlock forced a fingertip save from Smith from a tight angle before Aaron Morris headed over from a corner.

As half-time approached, Linnets appealed for a penalty as Shanley's cross cannoned off the arm of O'Hara but the official signalled play on.

There was one more chance for each side before the break; an angled header was claimed by Smith from Shanley while Griffiths' corner was tipped past the post by Forth.

The second half began with Thomas Grimshaw hitting a powerful shot just past the post ahead of Linnets breaking the deadlock on 51 minutes, Zach Aley rising to head Peter Wylie's lofted cross past Smith for 1-0.

Runcorn pushed to extend their lead, Corrigan testing Smith with an angled shot which he gathered before clever work by Sherlock on 72 minutes saw him pick out Potter who looked to slot home for 2-0, but he was denied by a stunning goal-line clearance from Coughlan.

United countered and should have cut the deficit as the combination of Griffiths and substitute Ronan Darcy led to Grimshaw firing narrowly over the bar.

An angled cross from Coughlan minutes later was spilled by Forth with substitute Sean Yeldrem achingly close to capitalising at the front post. As the game entered the final ten minutes, United gifted Linnets the chance to double their lead, Molyneux upending substitute Ryan Gibson with the referee awarding a penalty, Corrigan stepped up and slotted into the bottom corner for 2-0.

United kept their heads up and instantly benefited from Paul McNally's tactical change, a lofted pass from substitute Ronan Darcy saw Will Dunne flick on for "newly designated striker" John Keatley to slot past Forth for 2-1.

The final whistle sounded minutes later with Linnets celebrating the win and retaining top spot into 2019 while United despite ending the year bottom of the table do so with a positive performance.

Tough start to New Year as both sides face stern tests

SATURDAY sees another tough game for Paul McNally's Skelmersdale side when they take on play-off chasing Trafford at Volair Park Prescot, before they have a pair of games that could have a big say in the destiny of their season.

Burscough also have a difficult match on Saturday as they travel to play West Didsbury and Chorlton, a game with plenty of interest in West Lancashire.

The Manchester-based club have recently appointed former Burscough and Skelmersdale manager Dave Powell and as he did at Skem, he has got off to a good start, winning four games out of his first six in charge to lift his side out of the North-West Counties League relegation zone.

Burscough are unbeaten in five games so will go full of confidence and gradually they are seeing some of their good players returning from injury, Terry Cummings started for them over Christmas and Alex Parkes was again on the bench for them.

Skelmersdale will be very hopeful after their excellent performance on Saturday at league leaders Runcorn Linnets, although they are still bottom of Evo-Stik Division One West they are far from cast adrift and if they can build on last week's form Trafford are nowhere near as formidable opponents as Runcorn were.

Skelmersdale and Burscough are without midweek games next week, and both travel away next Saturday (January 12), Skem to Newcastle Town who are not very far above them in the league and Burscough to promotion contenders Congleton Town.

Burscough go to Irlam on Saturday, January 19 while Skem have a crucial game at home Chasetown the same day, the Staffordshire based side like Newcastle are only just above Skem.

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